

the requested records are located, or the District of Columbia.

Subpart E—Time Limits

§ 7.31 Initial determinations.

An initial determination whether to release a record requested pursuant to subpart C of this part will be made within twenty Federal working days after the request is received by the appropriate office in accordance with § 7.14, except that this time limit may be extended by up to ten Federal working days in accordance with § 7.33. The person making the request will be notified immediately of such determination. If the determination is to grant the request, the desired record will be made available as promptly as possible. If the determination is to deny the request, the person making the request will be notified in writing, at the same time he or she is notified of such determination, of the reason for the determination, the right of such person to appeal the determination, and the name and title of each person responsible for the initial determination to deny the request.

(a) *In general.* Components ordinarily will respond to requests according to their order of receipt.

(b) *Multitrack processing.* (1) A component may use two or more processing tracks by distinguishing between simple and more complex requests based on the amount of work and/or time needed to process the request, or on the number of pages involved.

(2) A component using multitrack processing may provide requesters in its slower track(s) with an opportunity to limit the scope of their requests in order to qualify for faster processing within the specified limits of the component's faster track(s). A component doing so will contact the requestor either by telephone, letter, facsimile, or electronic mail, whichever is most efficient in each case.

(c) *Expedited processing.* (1) Requests and appeals will be taken out of order and given expedited treatment whenever a compelling need is demonstrated and it is determined that the compelling need involves:

(i) Circumstances in which the lack of expedited treatment could reason-

ably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual;

(ii) Requests made by a person primarily engaged in disseminating information, with an urgency to inform the public of actual or alleged Federal Government activity.

(2) A request for expedited processing may be made at the time of the initial request for records or at any later time. For a prompt determination, a request for expedited processing must be received by the proper component. Requests must be submitted to the component that maintains the records requested.

(3) A requestor who seeks expedited processing must submit a statement, certified to be true and correct to the best of that person's knowledge and belief, explaining in detail the basis for requesting expedited processing. For example, a requestor within the category in paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section, if not a full-time member of the news media, must establish that he or she is a person whose main professional activity or occupation is information dissemination, though it need not be his or her sole occupation. A requestor within the category in paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section also must establish a particular urgency to inform the public about the government activity involved in the request, beyond the public's right to know about government activity generally. The formality of certification may be waived as a matter of discretion.

(4) Within ten calendar days of receipt of a request for expedited processing, the proper component will decide whether to grant it and will notify the requestor of the decision. If a request for expedited treatment is granted, the request will be given priority and will be processed as soon as practicable. If a request for expedited processing is denied, any appeal of that decision will be acted on expeditiously.

§ 7.32 Final determinations.

(a) A determination with respect to any appeal made pursuant to § 7.21 will be made within twenty Federal working days after receipt of such appeal except that this time limit may be extended by up to ten Federal working